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Representative

DAVE ANDERSON

10th District Legislative Report

Dear Friend,

Many of you have asked me what it is like to serve in the Legislature. A friend who encouraged me to seek this avenue of service said it was a wonderful opportunity to meet lots of interesting people and learn about our district in ways that aren't readily available to the average citizen. Well, she was certainly right! She also said there would be lots of meetings, and I must confess I had no idea about the workload of this job. During the session (January through April), we started our days with 7 a.m. or 8 a.m. meetings, and I usually didn't return to my apartment in Olympia until 9:30 or 10 p.m.

The Legislative process is intense. An astounding 2,406 bills were introduced into the House and Senate. Of these, all but 457 died trying to get over one of the dozen or so hurdles. A high percentage of bills which eventually passed were bipartisan, common-sense changes to existing laws to make government more responsive and efficient. However, the tax and budget bills were more hotly debated and were revised and re-voted on several times before final passage. Juvenile justice reforms, changes to growth management laws, welfare reform, and Basic Health Plan funding also passed. Yet, in my opinion, lawmakers spent an inordinate amount of time on several divisive, social issues.

Senator Haugen, Representative Sehlin, and I met every Wednesday morning at 7 a.m. to work on district and constituent issues and problems. I was grateful for the very cooperative, non-partisan and effective way we worked together. When I wasn't in committee or on the House floor, time was spent answering constituent mail, meeting with constituents or interest groups, studying bills and issues, drafting legislation, or attending other legislative-related events.

As a person who has been physically active and worked outdoors a good part of my life, it was quite an adjustment being inside buildings at meetings hour upon hour. Since the legislative session ended April 27 (on time), the load is lighter, but I consistently find myself spending three days a week in meetings. Parts of other days are spent on constituent or related legislative work.

I'm on three committees: Agriculture & Ecology, Natural Resources, and Health Care. I was also recently appointed to the Wetlands Subcommittee and the Council on Aging. Some of the summer meetings have been out in the field, thankfully, learning about forest practices, farmers' needs and concerns, wetlands issues, and water issues. Sometimes I feel like a juggler balancing the legislative work with running my own business, a Par 3 public golf course near Clinton.

The 10th Legislative District is a very activist one, so continue keeping me informed of your opinions, interests, concerns and problems. I would also appreciate hearing how I might improve my newsletters to better serve you. Ann Tjersland, my very helpful legislative assistant in Olympia, and I will listen and try to help whenever possible.

Sincerely,

Dave Anderson

Representative DAVE ANDERSON

LOCAL ISSUES

While most legislation that lawmakers consider impacts the entire state, there were two measures this year that specifically dealt with the 10th District. Working with Sen. Haugen, Rep. Sehlin and other area lawmakers, I was proud to have played a major role in passage of both measures:

- **Twin City Foods** — Area lawmakers were determined to remove the last major hurdle to rebuilding the Twin City Foods processing plant in Stanwood that was destroyed by fire in April 1996. HB 1017, which I co-sponsored, allows for the Department of Fish and Wildlife and Twin City Foods to swap ownership of separate parcels of land so that the new plant can be built in the same location.
- **Honoring the A6 Intruder Family** — The retirement of the A-6 Intruder aircraft was made official in February during ceremonies at the Whidbey Island Naval Air Station. For 30 years, Whidbey Island has been home to many of the Navy's Intruders, pilots, bombardiers, and ground crews. Whether our country was at peace or at war, the entire Whidbey Island family faithfully supported the service and dedication of these airmen. With HR 4637, House lawmakers officially paid tribute to the Navy personnel and their families for 30 proud years of service.
- **Preserving Scenic Coastlines** — With your help, area lawmakers and I succeeded again in defeating legislation that could turn our scenic island shorelines into visual blight. At issue was SB 5075, which would force local governments to find shoreline areas for fish pens and other *aquaculture* operations. I think it should be a local decision whether to permit these quasi-industrial uses of our shorelines. Personally, I don't support them because they pollute and change the ecology, present a navigational hazard, and infringe on the property rights of neighboring residents.

BUDGET

Lawmakers approved a \$19 billion state budget a week before the end of session. Displeased with funding levels for education, health care, children's programs and the environment, the governor vetoed many sections of the budget. As a result, budget-writers responded with a revised spending plan that provided additional money to address these major concerns. Even with these additions, the budget is well below the I-601 spending limit and holds the growth of government to its lowest level in 25 years. However, many programs (i.e., health care and workforce training) traditionally supported by dedicated funds were shifted to the state's general fund. Down the road, critics warn that the pressures on the general fund will only intensify and critical programs such as education will feel the pinch.

BUSINESS TAXES

The most significant tax cut of the year was the lowering of the Business & Occupation Tax (B&O) to pre-1993 levels. This tax reduction primarily affects service businesses which experienced tax increases during the fiscal crisis of 1993. The B&O tax reductions passed the Legislature with strong bipartisan support and will save businesses well over \$300 million over the next four years.

TRANSPORTATION

The Legislature failed to adequately address the critical issue of congestion on our highways. Even if the Department of Transportation had no waste and made no bad decisions (which is being examined by a legislative-directed audit), there isn't enough money available to fund needed maintenance and new construction. In several recent meetings, business and civic leaders have warned that our area's economic health could be in jeopardy if businesses feel it is too difficult here to move ever-increasing numbers of people to work, and goods to market. They have expressed their growing frustration that Olympia seems paralyzed by the very thought of adjusting the gas tax so it

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has the buying power today that it had a decade ago. Cars today generate less tax per mile driven because they are more fuel-efficient, yet highways today must be built to more exacting standards, making them more expensive even without considering inflation. I will continue to look at ways to provide enough revenue to build the roads, ferries and transit needed to forestall gridlock.

GROWTH MANAGEMENT

The Growth Management Act (GMA) was enacted in 1990 to reduce sprawl and the costs of growth to taxpayers while preserving the character of our communities, the environment, and our rural areas. There were high expectations for meaningful positive changes to the Growth Management Act owing to the appointment of a broadly based Land Use Study Commission charged with recommending changes. In 1996, lawmakers directed the Commission to address concerns that the GMA has gone too far in curbing development and become too intrusive into local decisions. The Commission forwarded several common-sense recommendations to the Legislature after a lot of give and take. Gov. Locke made it clear he would sign any bill that reflected these compromise recommendations. However, the House Government Reform & Land Use Committee chair insisted on bringing bills far more extreme than the commission's recommendations to the floor and they passed on very partisan votes. Good to his word, Gov. Locke vetoed much of it. What

was left probably improved GMA regulations but fell short of what could have been accomplished.

HIGHER EDUCATION

It makes sense to invest in higher education, for students and for Washington state. Each dollar invested in our colleges and universities returns \$9 to \$10 to the economy. To address the pressing demand for college opportunities, lawmakers approved additional funding to increase enrollment by approximately 65 more slots at Skagit Valley College and by 92 slots at Edmonds Community College. In addition, the prospect of a new four-year college in the north sound region improved this year as lawmakers included \$376,000 for the cooperative effort between Snohomish, Island, and Skagit Counties to evaluate and select a site for the new campus.



Rep. Anderson speaks to lawmakers on the floor of the House of Representatives.

JUVENILE JUSTICE

Twenty years after approving the last major re-write of juvenile justice laws, lawmakers unanimously approved a sweeping set of reforms aimed at holding violent teen offenders responsible for their actions, giving judges more flexibility, and eliminating outdated juvenile sentencing standards. The aim was to improve public safety by punishing the most violent juvenile offenders, while also providing the ability of our justice system to reach out to troubled youth and prevent future crimes.

PROPERTY TAX RELIEF



This year, with a projected \$1 *billion* surplus that could not be spent under Initiative 601, the state budget had ample resources to provide meaningful property tax relief to all homeowners. In January, I endorsed the Homeowner's Property Tax Credit to give virtually all homeowners a \$205 break on their yearly property tax payments. That plan would free homeowners from paying state property taxes on the first \$62,000 of their property valuation. The majority leadership rejected this approach because it would not provide additional tax cuts to large businesses, who have reaped the lion's share of tax relief over the last three years. The GOP proposal, which would save the average homeowner only about \$17 a year, will appear on the November ballot. I'm sorry our Democratic proposal that would be relatively more generous to homeowners and small businesses could not be on the ballot for the voters to choose between the two.

ENVIRONMENTAL LAWS



Again this year there was a wide range of anti-environmental proposals that, I believe, ignore the unmistakable will of the public. Dozens of measures seeking to weaken the Growth Management Act, reallocate scarce water resources, limit government oversight of pollution, and open scenic areas to development were introduced. Fortunately, nearly all of these measures failed to pass because they represented narrow special interests. Frequent public opinion polls demonstrate a clear and unwavering commitment of Washington residents to preserve the quality of our natural environment for future generations. In many respects, our quality of life is based on abundant, clean air and water, maintaining salmon populations, conserving forest and farmlands, and protecting streams and coastlines. In 1997, lawmakers achieved a major victory with the approval of a permanent ban on oil drilling off Washington's coast. Washington becomes the last West Coast state (besides Alaska) to enact a permanent moratorium on oil exploration off our coast.

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